

ST. MARY OF NAZARETH /ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI – WEST WICKHAM

17th April 2022: Easter Sunday

Hazel writes:

This is the key weekend of the year on which the Christian faith is founded. Without Christ's death and resurrection, we would not have the same faith as we do. It is therefore the most important time of year for worshipping God and giving thanks for what he has given us in Jesus. I do hope that you find a way in which to explore and celebrate your faith this weekend, especially as the past two years have had an element of restrictions over the Easter weekend. A very Happy Easter to you all.

Today, we have a Holy Communion service at 8am in St Mary's Church and Family Communion services (each followed by an Easter Egg Hunt) at 9.15am in St Mary's Church and at 10.45am in St Francis' Church. All donations taken at these services will go to the Bishop of Southwark's **Lent Call** which raises money to support projects throughout the diocese and in our link dioceses of Zimbabwe and Jerusalem.

Hymns at 9.15 a.m. in St. Mary's – Jesus Christ is risen today - All heaven declares – He has risen! – Abba Father – Thine be the glory.

Hymns at 10.45 a.m. in St. Francis' – Jesus Christ is risen today – This is the day – We have a gospel to proclaim – Here is bread, here is wine – Thine be the glory.

Next **Sunday 24th April**, we will have a Holy Communion service at 8am in St Francis' Church and a joint St George's Day Parade service at 10am in St Mary's Church.

Morning Prayer is held each week in St Francis' Church on Wednesday morning at 9.30am, followed by the church being **open for private prayer** from 10.30-11.30am. It is also held at St Mary's Church on Thursday morning at 9am.

Our **prayers for Ukraine** continue in our own private prayers, in our Sunday services and St Francis' church will be open for prayer from 10.30-11.30am every Wednesday morning with a space dedicated to prayers for Ukraine. Do let Hazel know if you would like additional times of prayer in the churches to be facilitated.

Resources and updates for the week ahead – This week our services will be livestreamed on YouTube from both St Mary's and St Francis' **at 9.15am & 10.45am** on Sunday. All other files for this week have been combined and posted as a pew sheet which has been sent on paper to those who have told us that they are not on-line. Other worship and resources that you might want to listen to or look at on Sunday:

- The Church of England's national virtual service will be available on their website at www.churchofengland.org.
- The BBC have the following programmes to watch and listen to:
 - Sunday Worship at 8.10am on Radio 4 – A celebration of the Eucharist with the Archbishop of Canterbury's Easter message.
 - Choral Evensong at 3pm on Radio 3 from Canterbury Cathedral on Easter Day.
 - On BBC 1: Songs of Praise at 1.15 p.m. – Sean Fletcher joins a pilgrimage to Lindisfarne in Northumberland to celebrate Easter.

Songs of Praise services on **May 8th**: Choices of your favourite hymns are invited but please complete the list at the back of the church by the end of today. As ever, we invite you to speak about this choice, if you would like to. (If you would prefer someone else to read your brief comments this can be arranged). No promises, but we'll include all that we can to make a balanced service.

The **West Wickham Village Day** is on Monday 2nd May from 10am to 4pm in Blake Park. Churches Together in West Wickham will be hosting a hospitality area with tea and coffee, Messy Church and a children's play area. If you are able to volunteer any time during the day, or for set up or dismantling, please contact Joan Clark at laurel46@btinternet.com with details of which area you'd like to volunteer in and a two-hour time slot when you could be available. There are also sign-up sheets in both church buildings. Thanks Hazel

Since the beginning of this year our **foodbank donation points** have supported the work of Bromley Borough Foodbank with 53.8kg of food and other household goods. Thanks to everyone who has donated.

Please bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage or St Francis' Church. Currently they require tinned hot and cold meat, tinned potatoes, tinned vegetables, long life fruit juice, tinned fish, chopped tomatoes, rice, custard, rice pudding. They are well stocked with pasta, cereals and baked beans. Please do not bring any fresh food, or baby milk as the foodbank cannot pass this on. You can also donate financially here <https://bromleyborough.foodbank.org.uk/give-help/donate-money>. Thank you for your continuing support.

Action Aid Saturday Coffee mornings are resuming again from 10.30 to 11.30 on the **first Saturday of the month**. It will be nice to meet up for a chat again on these occasions, so please do come along.

If you, or someone you know, has English as an additional language and would like to improve it, there is a six-week series of **informal free English conversation classes** running locally. These will be held at Bromley Methodist Church on Wednesday mornings (9.30am -11am) from 20th April to 25th May 2022. People are asked to register in advance through the church office (office@bromleymethodist.org or on 020 8313 1029), so they can prepare appropriately.

We held a meeting to discuss our **Ukraine response**. Before any refugees arrive in the West Wickham area, we would like to connect with any potential hosts, so that we can enable them to share experiences (for example, helping with the visa application process, or what the council are looking at when they come to your home). If you or anyone that you know in the local area has offered to host refugees under the Homes for Ukraine scheme, please do ask them to contact Hazel, who will begin to co-ordinate this response until someone is identified to facilitate this work on a longer-term basis.

West Wickham Rotary Club are holding a **Fundraiser Dinner** on Thursday May 12th at The Warren, which should be a very interesting and entertaining evening. Funds raised will go towards the London Search and Rescue team, which is based at The Warren, and there will be information on their work, as well as a speech from Richard Griffin who served the Royal Family as a protection officer for many years. There are copies of a flyer in the churches if you want more information. Tickets are £29. Let Hazel know if you would like to join her and others at the event and she will send you an electronic link to make a booking or will do it for you if you are not on the internet.

Two local ladies have set up a **befriending service** called Companions. There are leaflets about this in both of our churches, or if you'd like more information, contact either Andrea (07506 686238) or Maria (07939 120718) or by email at companions22@btinternet.com.

If anyone would like a pedestal at either church in memory of a loved one or to commemorate a special anniversary etc., please contact Merri Womack (8777 8772) for St Mary's (or there is a list to sign in the vestibule at St. Mary's) or Nicky Nightingale (nicholanightingale@hotmail.co.uk or 8916 9855) for St Francis'.

Our churches have been decorated for Easter by the ladies on the flower rotas and there is also an Easter garden in the gardens of St. Mary's.

Any items for the joint pew sheet to Beryl berylbolton@hotmail.com and items for the websites to brian.griff19@btinternet.com or Gifty office@stmarywestwickham.co.uk.

Collect

God of glory, by the raising of your Son you have broken the chains of death and hell: fill your Church with faith and hope; for a new day has dawned and the way to life stands open in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

First Reading: Acts 10: 34-43

³⁴ Then Peter began to speak to them: 'I truly understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵ but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶ You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. ³⁷ That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹ We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; ⁴⁰ but God raised him on the third day and allowed

him to appear, ⁴¹ not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

⁴² He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead.

⁴³ All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.'

Gospel Reading:

Luke 24: 1-12

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. ² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they went in, they did not find the body ⁴ While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. ⁵ The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.

⁶ Remember how he told

you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.' ⁸ Then they remembered his words, ⁹ and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰ Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹ But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ¹² But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

Post Communion Prayer

God of Life, who for our redemption gave your only-begotten Son to the death of the cross, and by his glorious resurrection have delivered us from the power of our enemy: grant us so to die daily to sin, that we may evermore live with him in the joy of his risen life; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

REFLECTION – Hazel O’Sullivan

I’d like to start today with a story set in a village in Papua New Guinea in the 1980s. Many of the traditional huts that people lived in had been replaced by European-style buildings. The church too was European in style, with a European style crucifix on the altar. One day a terrible thing happened. The termites ate Jesus and he fell off the cross, splitting into splinters of wood.

A local sculptor called Ketson was invited to carve a new Jesus in native style. But when he finished his carving, he couldn’t bring himself to nail the new Jesus to the cross on the altar. He asked his friends around the village, but none of them could bring themselves to put the nails into Jesus.

Eventually they had a different idea: “we’ll not nail Jesus back on the cross”, they decided. “We will suspend the new Jesus above the cross, and from now on he will speak to us every day of his rising.”

This church in Papua New Guinea was able to see their crucifix in a new light when they placed Jesus in a different position. And in the gospel story this morning, the women at the tomb were able to see the death of Jesus in a new light when they experienced his resurrection.

I wonder about you. Do you hear the Easter story each year and know it off by heart, so not really look at it in detail? Or are you prepared to look at it in a new light each time and experience his rising in the way those women did that first Easter morning?

Some would see certainty of faith as a virtue. I wonder if you do. Is it good to know the bible stories well and never have to question what happened on that first Easter morning? You might say that this shows you have a strong faith.

Let’s look at the story in a bit more detail and find out what certainty and uncertainty can lead to.

Well to start with the women were perplexed when they found the stone rolled away and the body of Jesus missing. And then the two men in dazzling white created real fear in them. They were terrified. The uncertainty that they were facing at that moment, when all their understanding about what had happened two days earlier was being questioned, was very uncomfortable. They would have preferred some certainty at this stage.

And this is often why we'd prefer to stick with what we know. We'd prefer to be sure about what we're dealing with because it's easier.

And the disciples that the women told their story to; they didn't want to change their view of what had happened did they? Jesus had died and they weren't going to believe what the women were telling them; this was just an idle tale and they easily dismissed it. Except for Peter. He was prepared to go out of his way and see for himself what the women were talking about – to test it out, to make investigation and begin to wonder what it meant.

I think that we shouldn't be afraid to re-think something and be prepared to recognise that we might have got something wrong, or that a situation has changed. Yes, this may be uncomfortable, but sometimes such a rethinking can lead to a wonderful revelation of God. Indeed, this is part of what we do each week in our service when we have a time of confession. We repent of something that we've done which has upset God and we make a commitment to doing better in the future. And the transformation that's possible through God's forgiveness is marvellous. And this happens many times over. For me, on a daily basis.

And in our first reading this morning Peter was speaking in a situation where there was great uncertainty. He had been prepared to go out of his way to test what he'd been told in a most unlikely vision in verses 9 -16 of this chapter in Acts, about a sheet containing all kinds of four-footed creatures being lowered from heaven and him being told to kill and eat (despite some of them being prohibited foods). The place where Peter had gone to and was now speaking the words in the reading, was in the home of Cornelius, a Roman centurion. Peter had gone there despite him knowing with certainty that it was unacceptable to mix with Gentiles (indeed it was unlawful to do so). Without accepting that maybe he was wrong and that it was OK to enter into that uncertain situation, Peter would never have met Cornelius, who might never have become a believer. Are we to deny such transformational situations from happening?

So, is it good to be certain about something? Is certainty a virtue? I think that we all need to be open to learning something new about Jesus, open to seeing him in a new light all through our lives. That's the only way in which we can go further and deeper in exploring our faith and sometimes we need to talk this through with others to test out our understanding, which may be uncomfortable. This is what those villagers in Papua New Guinea did, so as to find a way to incorporate a new Jesus within their old surroundings, so that it spoke of his rising. This is what some of us have been doing during Lent in our Lent groups to find a new way of understanding Jesus' teaching in

the Beatitudes. This is what the women at the tomb did when they saw Jesus' death in a new light with their experience of his resurrection.

Easter is a time to be open to the God of Surprises. Today let us be open to finding a way of rejoicing at what it is that God shows us, through investigating any uncertain situations that we face, however surprising they might be.

Prayer Pointers

Give thanks, for the tremendous victory of the resurrection and for the hope, the joy, the fulfilment, the everlasting life that Easter brings.

Give thanks for the role of women in the resurrection narrative – for those who went to the tomb early on that first Easter morning and for Mary Magdalene who was the first to see the risen Christ. Pray for all women in ministry in the church and give thanks for their special gifts in preaching and leading worship.

Pray for the world's leaders and rulers. Pray especially for all those trying to bring a peaceful conclusion to the war in Ukraine. Pray for an end to the conflict and for a return to peace and security.

Pray for all those who are in pain: those we know and love and those known to God alone who are sick, full of sorrow, loneliness or despair. In our congregations we pray for those struggling with ill health – especially Julie Bailey, Vicky Pearce, Barbara Colpus and Mary Sanders. Pray that every heart will be touched with Christ's eternal love filling each seemingly hopeless situation with the promise of resurrected, everlasting hope.

For the soul of Cynthia Symes, for her husband Archie, her daughters Joanna and Michelle and all her family. May God help them all to begin again.

Offer our own personal prayers – our deepest needs, our fears, our joys and thanksgivings and for all those who we love dearly. Pray that the Risen Jesus may go before us this week into every situation we face and that he will give us new eyes to encounter his freshness and new life.

A Prayer for Ukraine

God of strength and peace, send your blessing on the people of Ukraine. Sustain them in their struggles, hold them in their fear, protect them from all danger, and be for them the hope they desire.

(Composed by Andrew Nunn – Dean of Southwark)

Bishop of Southwark's Lent Call Prayer 2022

Loving and saving God, we thank you that you have given us a home with you in heaven, help us work to enable others to feel at home in our communities. Give us your generosity of spirit that we might work with our neighbours to bring hope and peace to those around us. Amen.